Harehills Park

Report on findings of the 2023 public consultation on the Leeds City Council managed Community Park “Harehills Park” and vision plans for it.

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The Project

As set out in the Leeds Parks and Green Spaces Strategy, we are working to develop a 'plan on a page' for each of our 65 community parks. The aim of the plans is to set out a vision for each of the sites, with the goal of getting all community parks in the city to Leeds Quality Park (LQP) standard and delivering the priorities set out in the Parks and Green Spaces strategy such as 'Quality parks', 'Access for All' and 'Health and Wellbeing'

Figure 1: Satellite image showing location of Harehills Park in Leeds, West Yorkshire, UK



The Vision Plan

The initial proposal shown below was created by expert staff from Leeds City Council Green Spaces Service in collaboration with a team of Landscape Architects from Groundwork West Yorkshire.

Figure 2:(Overleaf) Proposal 'Plan on a Page' for Harehills Park

HAREHILLS PARK

WHERE WE WANT TO BE, PLAN ON A PAGE



Parks and Countryside Priorities

Health and Wellbeing
Providing a wide range of opportunities for people to receive the health benefits of spending time in green spaces

Climate and Biodiversity
Increasing wildlife and biodiversity and reducing the impact of climate change.

Culture
Providing exciting, diverse, interesting and enjoyable green spaces that reflect the history and culture of their local communities.

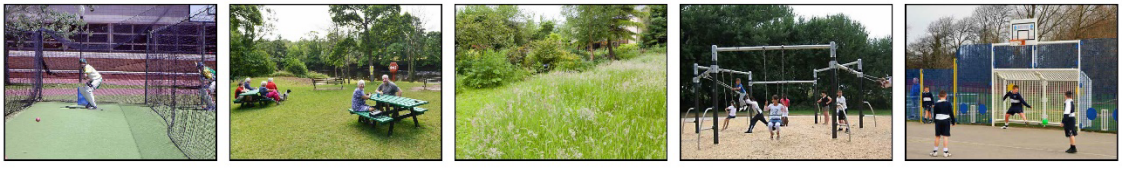
Working with Communities
Having a positive, open, helpful and collaborative approach.

Quality
Providing high quality parks and green spaces.

Access for all
Ensuring that parks and green spaces are accessible to everyone.

Child Friendly
Providing green spaces that children and teenagers love to visit.

Financial Sustainability
Ensuring that good quality public green space is available for the long term.



February 2023

Leeds City Council

The Consultation process

The Initial stage of the process was a site visit with Green Spaces Technical Officers, Area Officers, Site managers, and Groundwork's landscape architects. This resulted in the production of the draft proposal plan. This draft proposal plan was then sent for comments to the 3 ward councillors for the Gipton & Harehills ward in which Harehills Park sits.

Following this, a public engagement and consultation process lasting 3 months was undertaken to enable us to get a really good understanding of what local residents think about the site and how it could be improved.

For Harehills Park the period of consultation was 12th July until 12th October 2023.

For this period an online survey was available on Commonplace, where it can still be viewed: https://leedscommunityparks.commonplace.is/

Paper surveys were made available and used by some people during on-site sessions. Also, around 30 people contributed to the consultation through more informal conversations.

The promotional materials (including posters and flyers) provided an option for contacting us by telephone or email to request a paper survey or any further information.

The consultation was promoted as follows:

- Posters on the park noticeboards.
- Where their managers agreed, posters were displayed in shops, food outlets, pharmacies, laundrettes & other local businesses within 0.5km of the park.
- Direct postal mailout of flyers (like the posters in figure 3 but printed in black & white) to 900 households close to the park.
- Emails were sent to the 8 schools closest to the park.
- The following community groups were identified and emailed links to the online survey, visited with posters & flyers and/or sent paper copies of the survey to share: The Compton Centre, Harehills Children's Centre, Catch, Oak Tree Lodge care home, Harehills Working Men's Club, Harehills Labour Club
- Promotional posts were put on @leedsparks Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.
- An email linking to the survey was sent to all Green Spaces staff and paper surveys were made available to parks staff based onsite who cannot always receive email.

To gather input from people who prefer to chat face to face or who don't use the internet, a Parks Officer spent a total of 8 hours on site, over 2 different pre-advertised sessions, one of which was a weekend, to be accessible to as many people as possible.

Further to being contacted, some schools forwarded the information to parents/carers telling them about the survey and Harehills Primary School invited us to run a workshop style session with a group of children from their school council. Their input is reported in the 'Children's Perspective' section below.

Figure 3: Promotional poster for the Harehills Park Public Consultation



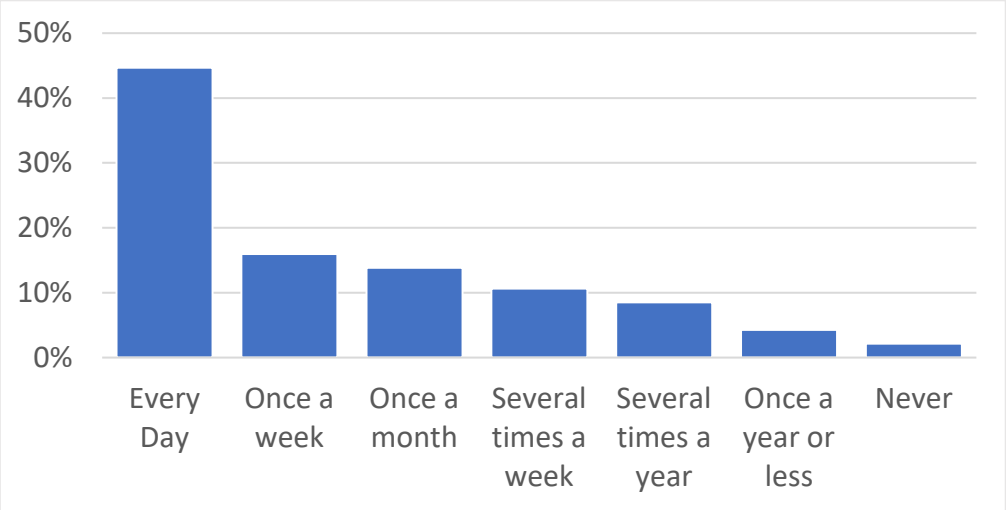
Survey respondents

Between 12th July & 12th October, 92 people completed the survey. In addition, 7 people were formally surveyed in the park or completed paper surveys and around 30 informal conversations took place. These responses were added to the online data and incorporated in the information below. Information about the respondents is provided in Appendix 1 – Demographic data. Of the total 99 respondents, it is worth noting that not all of them answered all of the questions.

How the Park Gets Used

We asked the Question “Approximately how often do you visit Harehills park?”

Figure 4: Frequency of visits to the park by survey respondents



We asked “What do you use Harehills park for?”

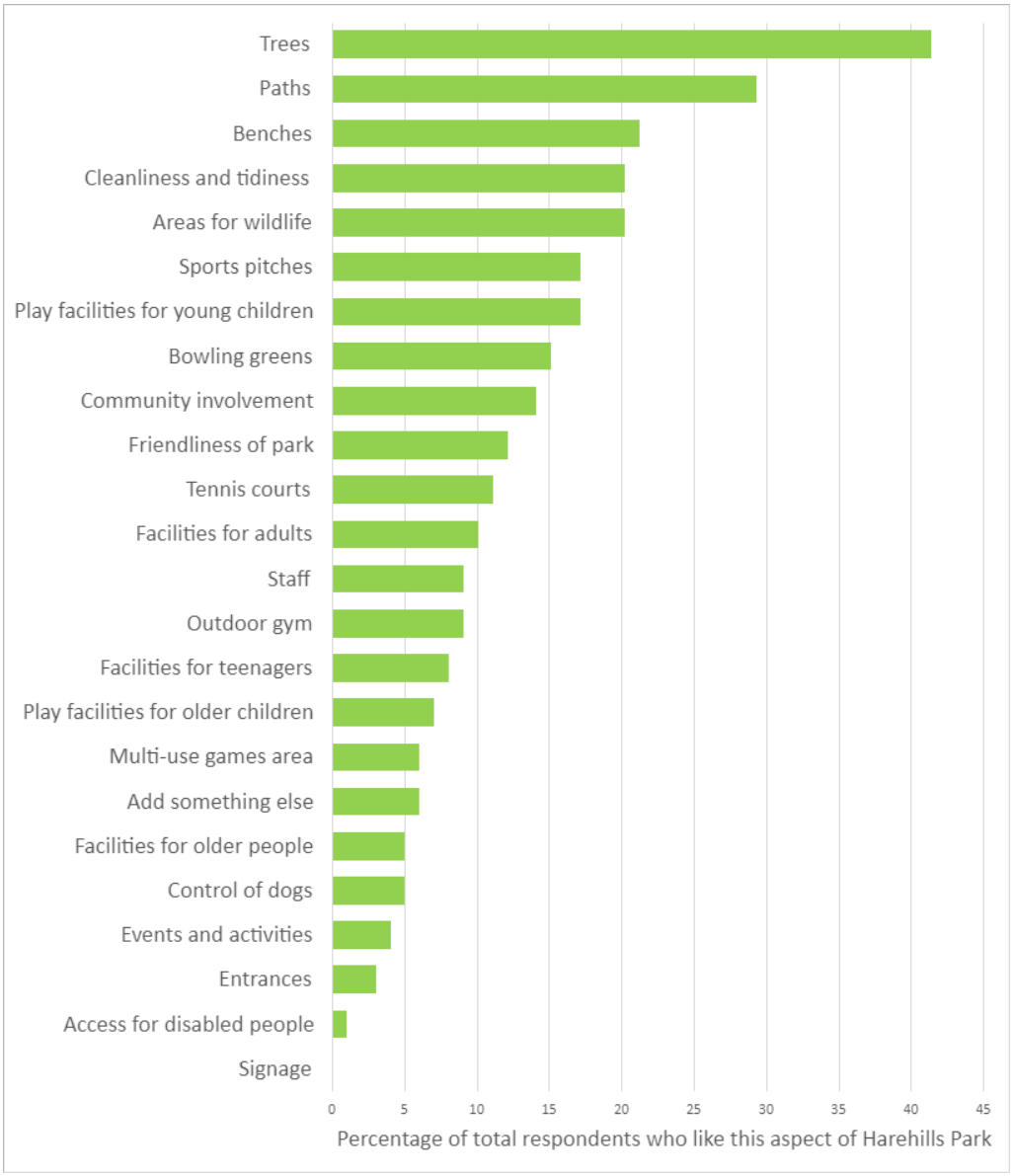
Figure 5: What survey respondents use the park for



Feelings about Harehills Park

We asked “What do you like about Harehills park?”

Figure 6: What survey respondents like about Harehills Park

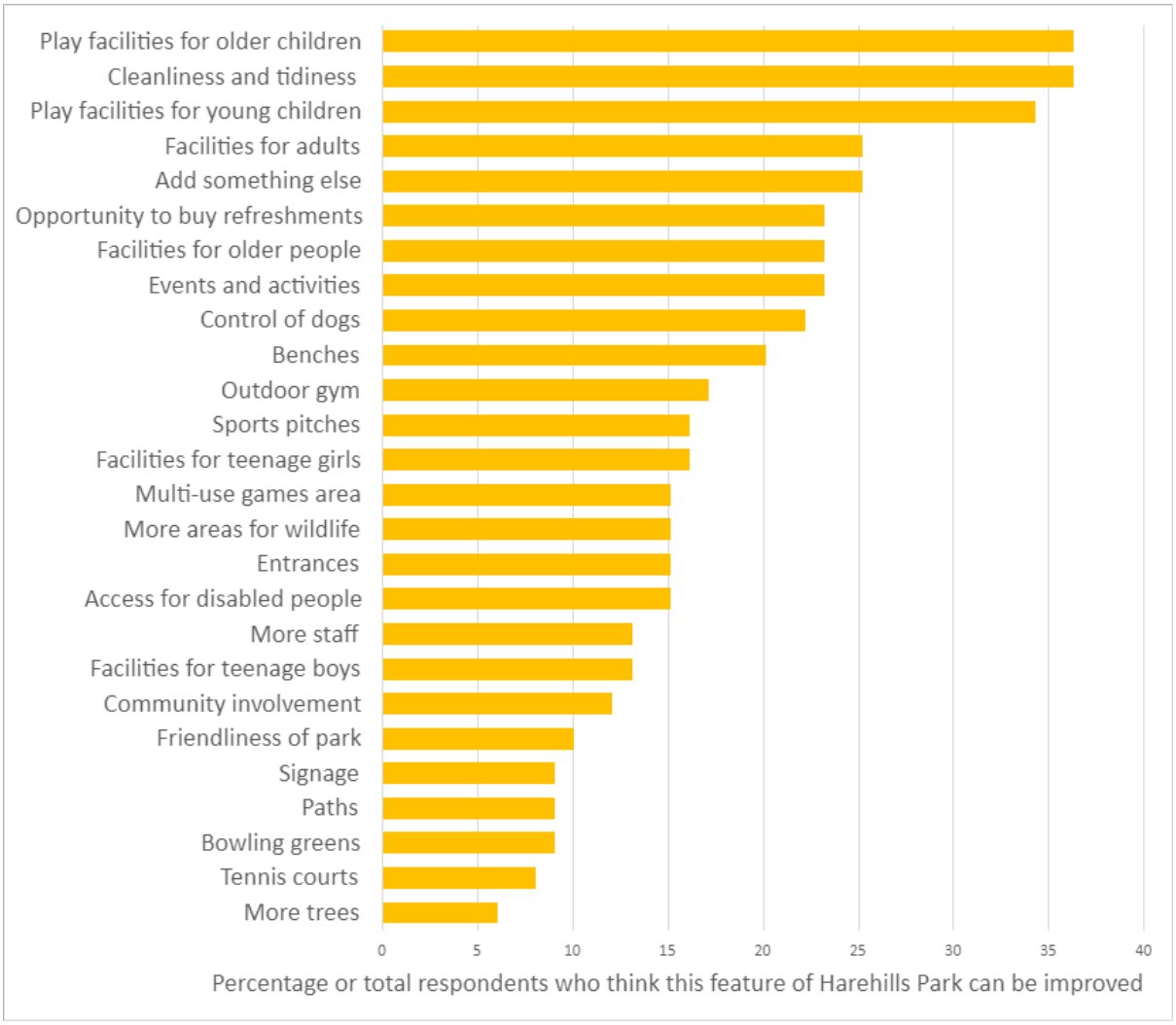


The 5 most popular responses to the question “What do you like about Harehills park?” were:

- Trees
- Paths
- Benches
- Areas for wildlife
- Cleanliness and tidiness

We asked “Is there anything you think could be improved about Harehills park?”

Figure 7: What survey respondents think could be improved about Harehills park



The 5 most popular responses to the question “Is there anything you think could be improved about Harehills park?” were:

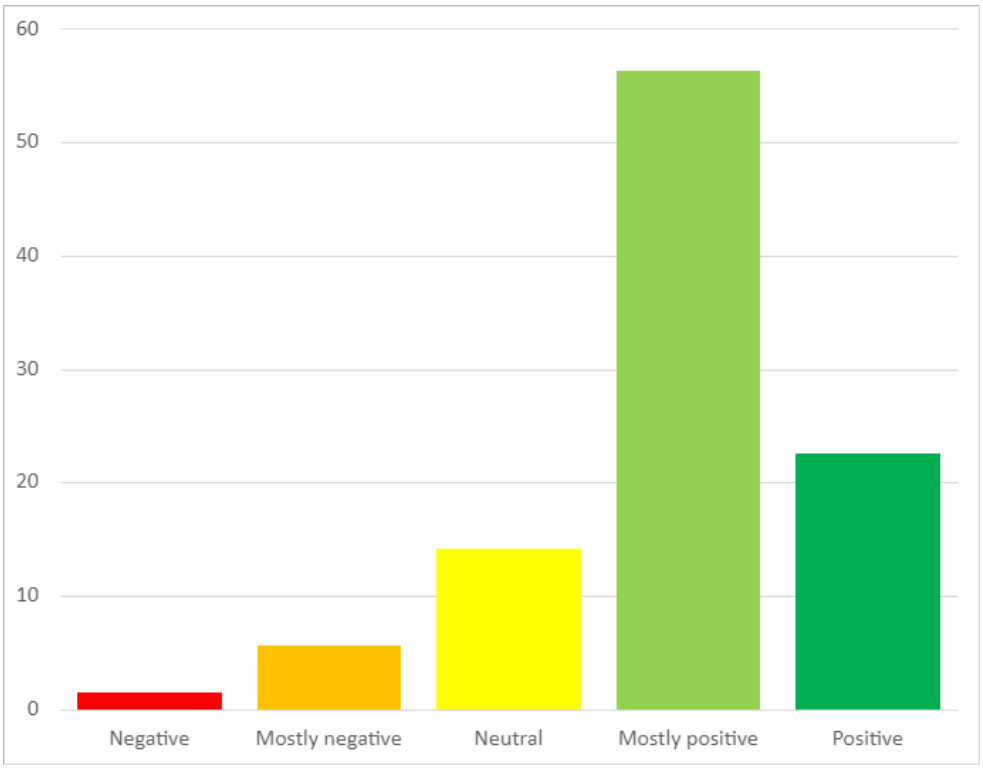
- Play facilities for older children
- Cleanliness and tidiness
- Play facilities for young children
- Facilities for adults
- Opportunity to buy refreshments.

The comments in the “add something else / other” section have been added to the data in Appendix 2 and summarised in the “Other ideas and comments” section of this document.

Feedback on the vision plan

140 people answered the question “Overall, what do you think of the plan for Harehills Park?”

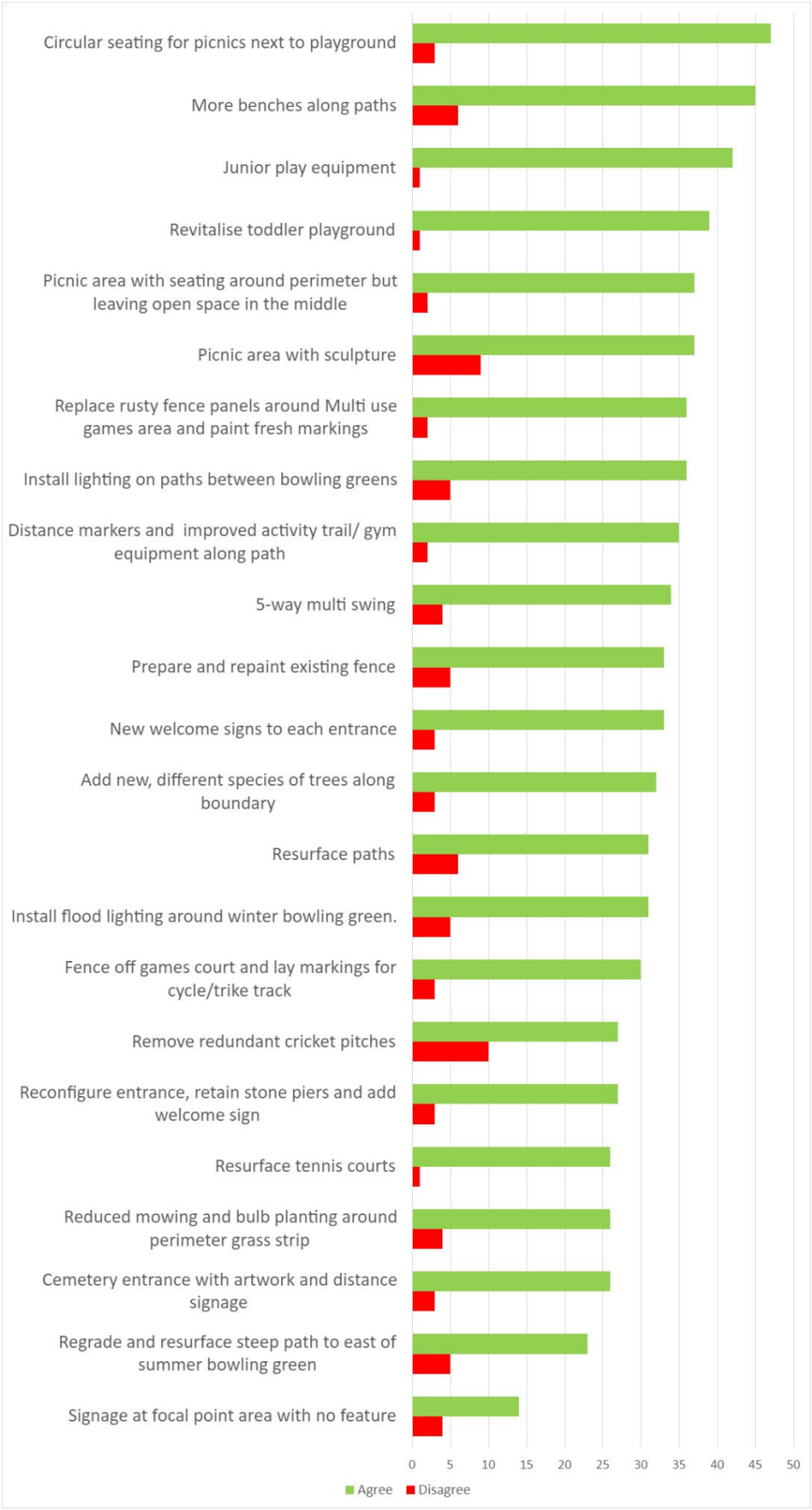
Figure 8: Overall opinions of the plan for Harehills Park by percentage of respondents



79% said they were ‘mostly positive’ or ‘positive’ about the plan.
7% said they were ‘mostly negative’ or ‘negative’ about the plan.

We specifically asked for thoughts on 23 suggestions of ways we might improve the park. The respondents were asked which they agreed with and which they did not. It was not obligatory to answer this question so it is assumed that where people didn’t respond, it was because they were indifferent.

Figure 9: Chart showing number of positive and negative responses to the suggestions we made



The 5 proposals with the most agreement were:

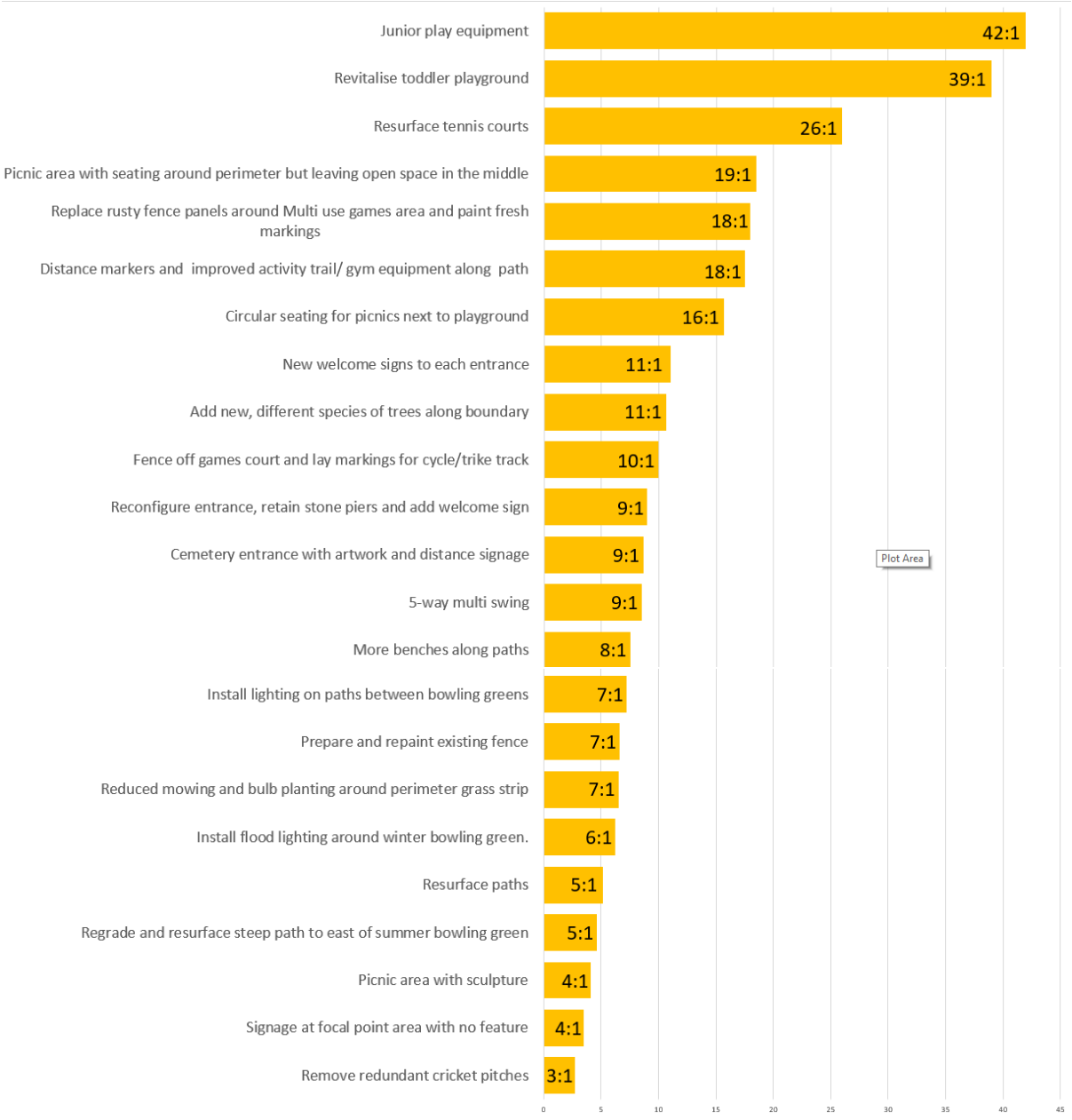
- Circular seating for picnics next to playground
- More benches along paths
- Junior play equipment
- Revitalise toddler playground
- Picnic area with seating around perimeter but leaving open space in the middle

The 5 proposals with the most disagreement (though the numbers of people disagreeing in general was quite low) were:

- Remove redundant cricket pitches
- Picnic area with sculpture
- Resurface paths
- More benches along paths
- Regrade and resurface steep path to east of summer bowling green

However, although there were some people who disagreed with some of the suggestions, there was significantly more support for all of them than disagreement. Overleaf is a bar chart setting out the ratio of agreement/disagreement for each suggestion. A ratio of 10:1 meaning that for every 10 agreements there was one disagreement.

Figure 10: What survey respondents think of suggestions of ways we might improve the park, bar chart shows ratio of positive to negative responses, bigger bars meaning more positive.

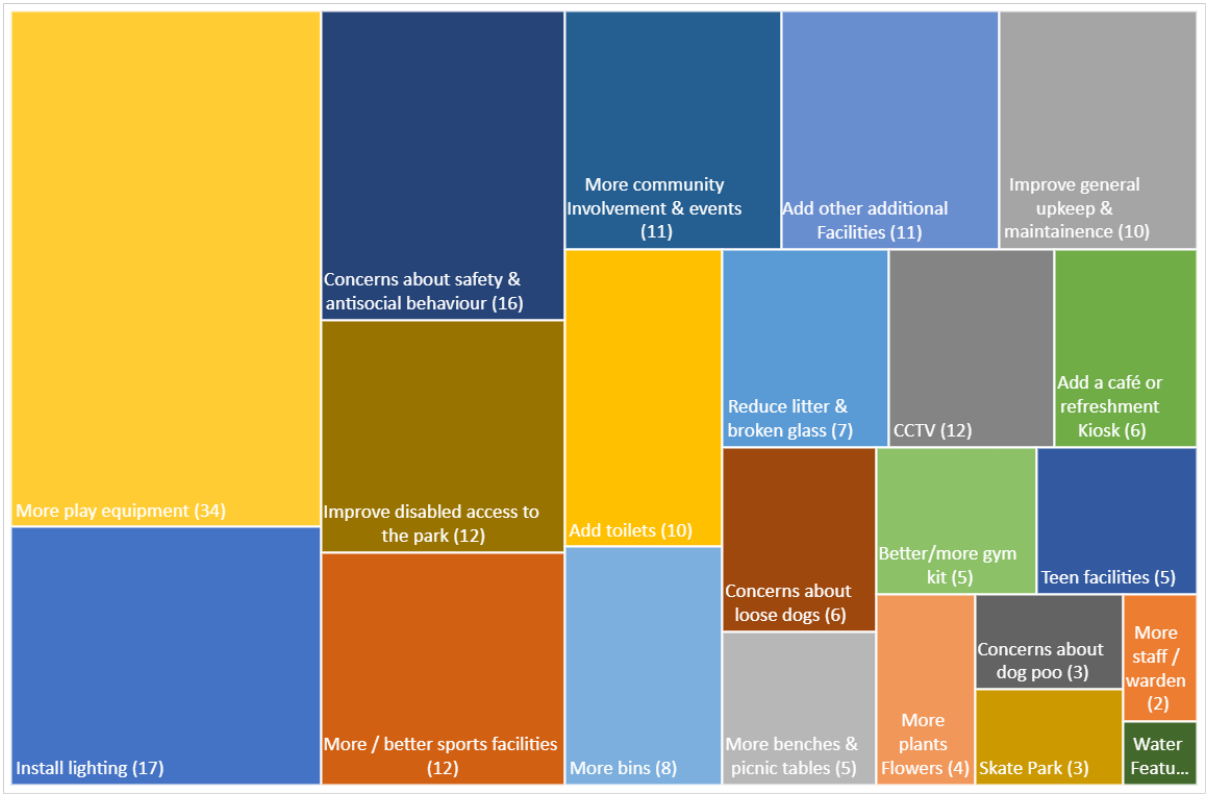


Other ideas and comments

We asked: “Do you have any other ideas for improving Harehills Park that you would like to share with us?” and “Do you have any other comments on Harehills Park?”

The comments and ideas are summarised here in figure 11. The size of each block relative to the frequency of mentions the subject received in comments. The full text of comments by respondents can be found in Appendix 2 and data tables in Appendix 3.

Figure 11: Graphical representation of subject matter in comments, size of blocks representing frequency of subject occurring in the ‘other’ comments, graphic including number of occurrences.



Children's perspective

Input from the School Council at Harehills Primary School gave support for the following suggestions:

- Install a 5-way multi swing.
- Re-lay surface on tennis courts.
- Add distance markers & activity / gym equipment along path.
- Revitalise the toddler playground.
- Add seating for picnics next to playground and near the orchard.
- Install entrance signs & reconfiguring of entrance near yard.
- Replace rusty fencing around Multi Use Games Area.

Other ideas they proposed included adding:

- Slides & a seesaw.
- A skate park.
- A zip line.
- Trampolines.
- Monkey bars.
- More Bins.

Love Leeds Parks charity community engagement

In addition to the Leeds City Council survey that is the subject of this report, in summer 2023 independent charity *Love Leeds Parks* had a number of conversations with local people to find out their views about Harehills Park and how it might be used. They had direct interactions with people from organisations including Feel Good Factor, Getaway Girls, Harehills Bowling Club, Harehills Neighbourhood Forum and Junior Sports Hub.

When communities were asked what Harehills Park means to them, some of the following themes emerged:

- SPORTS Many participating residents associated the park as a venue for sport.
- SOCIAL Residents identified the park as a shared space, where they could come together.
- WELLBEING Residents fed back they viewed the park as a quiet space, where they could relax and recharge.
- FAMILY The park is popular with families, particularly those with younger children.
- NATURE Participants frequently identified the park as a reason to get outside and connect with nature.

They identified themes relating to the question 'What do Residents Want to Engage with at Harehills Park', these were:

- Social gatherings
- Community meals
- Health & wellbeing activities
- Activities for children & young people
- Community gardening

The following-themes emerged from responses to the question – what are the barriers to accessing Harehills Park:

- Safety of women and girls within the park, particularly those visiting alone
- Vandalism
- Anti-social behaviour
- Littering, including broken glass in play areas.

Conclusions

Summary of findings:

- 99 people filled in the survey about the proposals for Harehills park and we spoke to around 30 others whilst in the park and out and about in the community.
- The proposed plan was supported by the majority of survey respondents (79%) with only 7% saying they felt 'negative' about the proposals.
- Many respondents were keen to see more and better play facilities in the park, for older children and teenagers in particular.
- The proposal for more benches and picnic benches was also widely welcomed.

Harehills park is well-used and valued by members of the local community but the feedback suggests it could be made more welcoming by improving visitor facilities and tackling litter and anti-social behaviour.

In response to the findings of the consultation we have made the following changes to the initial plan:

- Make the entrances more accessible: many people told us of their challenges accessing Harehills Park on mobility scooters, wheelchairs & with pushchairs due to the many restrictive width gates and barriers.
- Relocate community notice board at the main Coldcotes Avenue entrance if supporting community group can be identified.
- Add netball markings & posts to the multi-use games area so netball can be played there as well as football and basketball.
- Add some more seating in the orchard area.
- Retain all the cricket practice strips for now, as these continue to be used.
- Remove the proposed picnic area and sculpture at the western end of the park and retain colourful wildflower meadow.

Other things to consider:

- Promoting the park off-site: There were a number of local people consulted who were not aware of the park, so it could be worth providing signage from nearby main roads and looking at ways to promote the park through other means (such as online).
- There are challenges with drug use and other antisocial behaviour in the park with quite a few respondents feeling unsafe there, especially in the evening and calling for CCTV, lighting and security patrols to deal with it. Bench locations should also be considered carefully to ensure they don't attract anti-social behaviour.
- Finding ways to increase community engagement at the site through providing events, a café/concession and toilets, perhaps creating a community hub at the site.

Appendix 1: Demographic data

Figure 12: Chart showing number of survey respondents by age

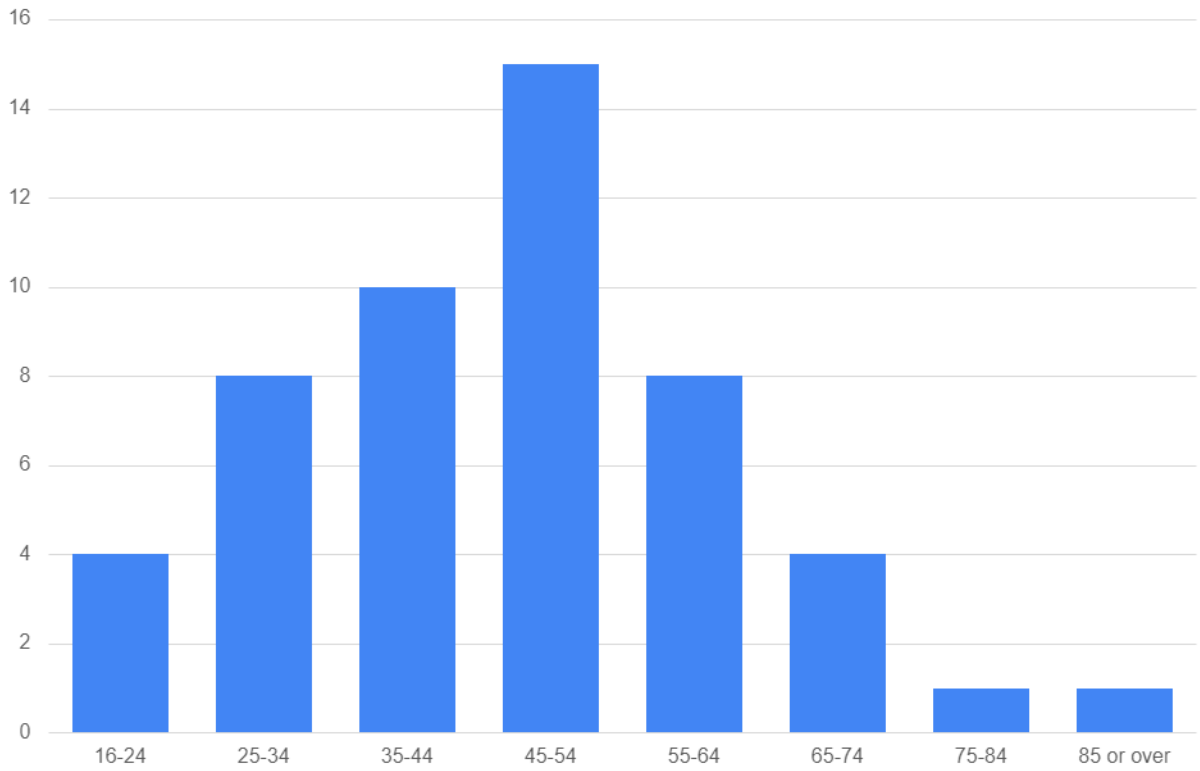


Figure 13: Chart showing employment status by number of respondents to survey.

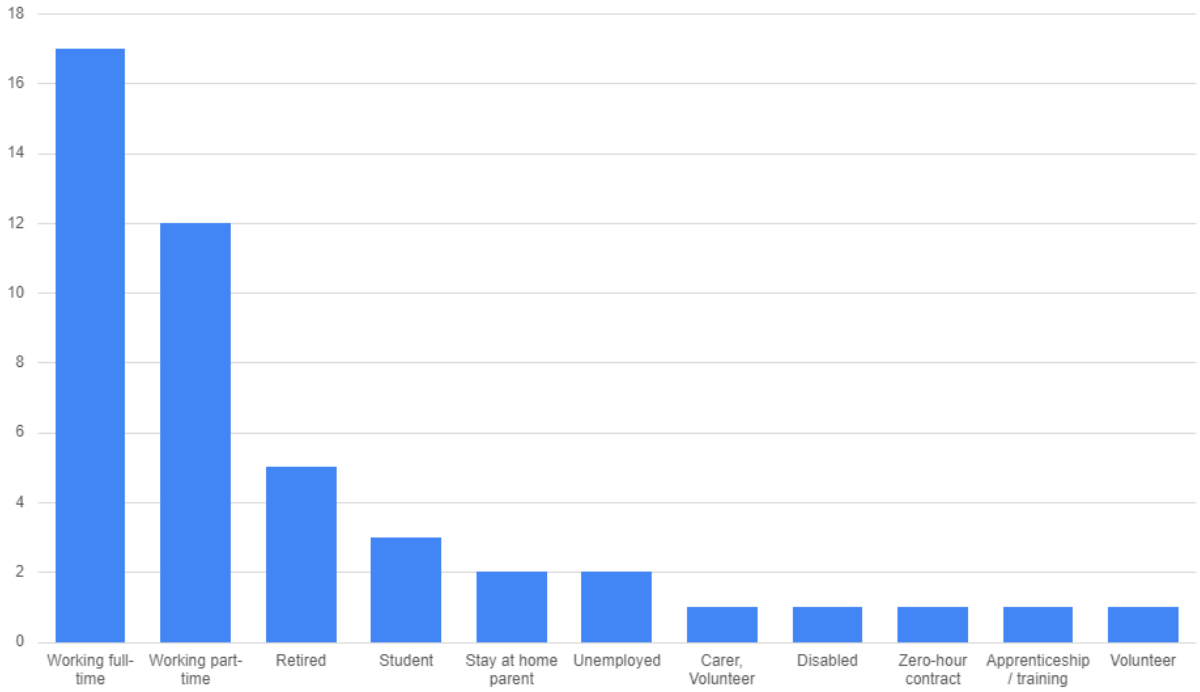


Figure 14: Chart showing how respondents to survey describe their gender by number of respondents to survey.

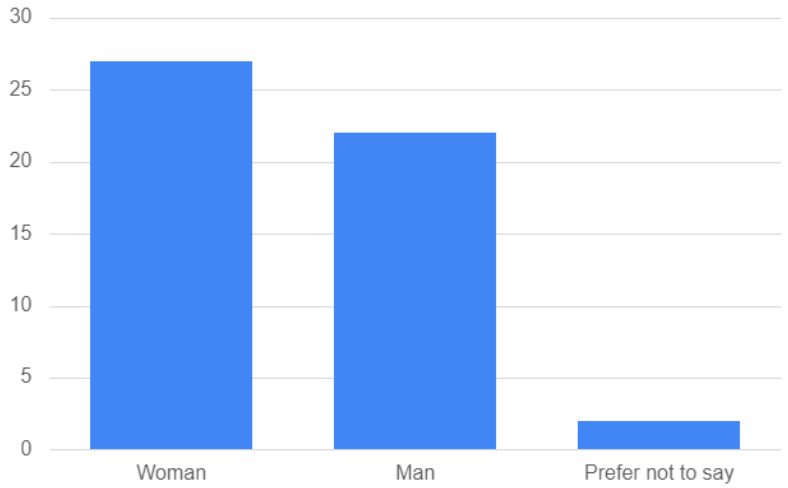


Figure 15: Chart showing how respondents to survey describe their ethnicity by number of respondents to survey.

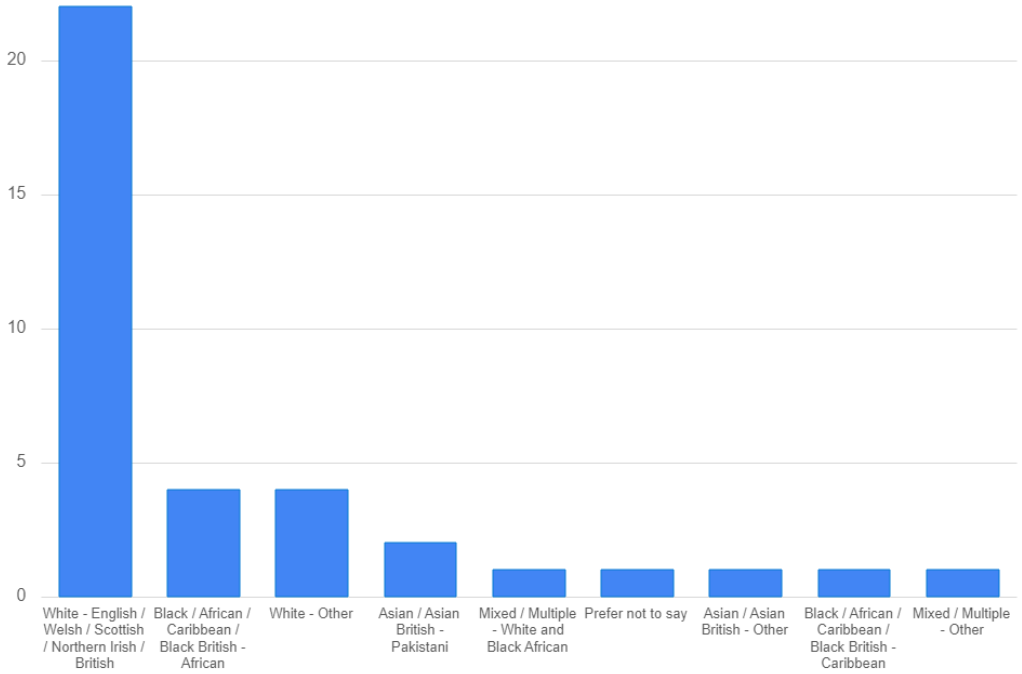
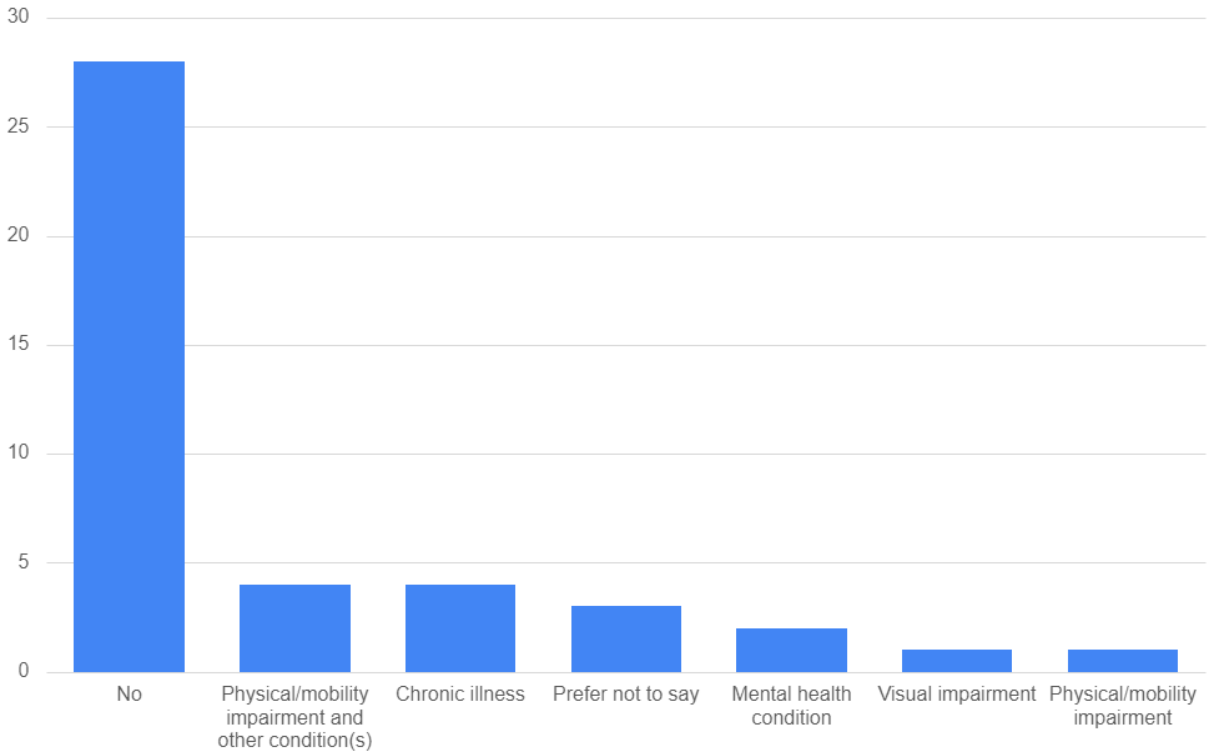


Figure 16: Chart showing number of people who identified as having a type of disability



Appendix 2: Full text of comments by respondents

We asked "Do you have any other ideas for improving Harehills Park that you would like to share with us?" and "Do you have any other comments on Harehills park?". The responses to these questions are shown in full below:

Bins need emptying more often especially in summer. I live opposite this park and the amount of rubbish dumped by bins/overflowing bins is a joke at times. Also, the entrance from Coldcotes Avenue use to have a bin upon entering which seems to have disappeared.

Have a specific small area where multiple dogs can be left off leash almost a small dog park. Ensures people don't allow their dogs off leash across the entire park which is what is currently happening. Will create more community involvement where dog owners can meet up and not have to worry about receiving a fine if they leave their dog off leash.

Thank you for upgrading the park, it will encourage me to visit with my son more. I would like to see more community events and activities to engage the community. I really like the idea of the picnic areas. The play area is definitely in need of an upgrade. One idea might be to have a wellbeing area that provides a relaxing space for reading/meditation/reflection etc.

An outdoor gym.

We at England Netball would love to deliver community Netball sessions (Back to Netball, Walking Netball, BEE Netball) in Harehills Park that women and girls could access safely in their community. If netball lines were marked out in the MUGA we would run regular programmes through the year for local people and groups to enjoy!

Don't cut the grass so short outside the bowling area.

Install more bins.

Street light around the inside perimeter.

Presence of littering enforcement officers.
Bigger entrance on Harehills Park Terrace to allow your shopping trolley through easily.

I would like the stone pillars at the entrance to be kept but no welcome signs. We do also need more bins in the park Repairs/ replacements should be made on playground equipment.

More for older children, above 10. Skate park, bike ramps etc.

Have signs to make sure dog owners pick up waste. More swings for older children. Dogs need to be on leash near kids play area. More lighting. More benches near kids play area field football goal post.

I feel there should be better access for disabled people to get into the park coming from Coldcotes Drive and Foundry Approach directions. Currently if you are unable to get out of a wheelchair and walk through the swing gates you have to walk all the way to almost Bellbrooke Avenue to get in or right round to the Cemetery entrance behind Asda.

The play area needs to be significantly bigger to enable more children to play.

The winter bowling green now called an orchard needs resurfacing back to a bowling green. Current demand means an additional bowling green in summer is needed. Trees can be planted elsewhere around the bowling green.

No, it's absolutely fine. Leave it as it is and save the money. Times are hard and money can be better spent on other things.

More bins and signage to use them.

There is always a lot of smashed glass so a regular street sweeper would be most welcome.

Lighting at the top where the old play area was to deter people meeting to buy drugs.

More bins or larger bins. Dedicated bbq area. Fenced off dog run

You've not mentioned supporting the wildflower area and established orchard despite them appearing in the pictures. These are both invaluable for nature and encouraging diversity in the park.

I have a few suggestions: it would be nice if the tennis courts had nets and in addition to that if Harehills could have Tennis Coaching like other areas, I think it would be a great opportunity for the youth to develop their Tennis skills and thereby make more use of the Tennis courts. It would also be nice to have basketball courts that have new rims, the last time I checked, the basketball rims are missing. The only one remaining does not have a net.

More calisthenics/gym workout stuff for pull ups etc.

A healthy workout area to stay healthy and fit.

Broken glass is always a problem perhaps more regular sweeping of the footpaths.
Preferably a baby/toddler play area and big kid play area but all confined in one big play area space with multiple gates with lock

Put cctv in park

Move the grass football pitch somewhere level. It might as well be on the himalayas.

More lighting and cctv

Access for wheelchair and mobility scooter users and double buggies so we can go in by cemetery (that's good entrance wide enough) and leave other side by buildings or play area. I would love to be able to use it on my daily trips to Harehills to walk dog (from scooter) and shopping as love the peacefulness and the wildlife area
Better quality football pitch as the one at the moment is a disgrace. More CCTV, more police patrols to discourage open drinking and vandalism. Something needs to be done with the old cottages, maybe a community hub?

More play kit for kids & teens. Benches in orchard. Lamp posts.

More control over dog walkers keeping dogs on a lead.

Needs an area with refreshments and toilets like a cafe and for local groups to book for events such as mum groups. Lot of local groups end up booking Roundhay etc as they have toilet facilities.

Lights, only a couple, play markings like hopscotch etc. A zebra crossing by the entrance on Coldcotes Ave near the bowling would make crossing the road a lot safer.

More lights in general

I have lived next to Harehills park for 30 years and not once have I seen the park given the same attention as parks in more affluent areas of Leeds. It's such a dense population in Harehills and there are loads of children around here who have to share such a small, poorly kept and inadequate play area spaces. The equipment selection is very poor and the size of the playground is awful, especially on a summers day. Roundhay park and other bigger parks always receive the best treatment and best equipment and facilities for kids. I don't always like taking my daughter to Harehills park as the equipment area is just shocking. It needs expanding and more equipment such as swings, climbing frames, hard wearing flooring, slides and over all better quality equipment. Parents are having to que with their children for ages to get on broken swings and poorly maintained jungle gyms. If the playground is expanded and given more equipment that is maintained more often, you will have more happier parents in Harehills. Get some more high-quality picnic and bench areas. Lots of people sit on the floor and could be sat at hard wearing table areas. Please please can the council consider what I'm saying and expand the playground area to meet the needs of the area!!!

This is a very well used park, a lifeline for the community. Unfortunately, the biggest issue is constant vandalism. Whenever anything is installed or improved it is immediately destroyed :(I don't see anything in here that appears to address that. Please put in robust features otherwise it will all be destroyed before anyone can enjoy it and consider additional staff/CCTV or other security measures.

To have an information board. To have either a cafe or pop-up mobile service at regular times, to host events, activities and festivals. A huge improvement would be to have it signposted from Harehills Lane and the Compton Centre as many people do not know it's even there. To carry out a consultation just with girls to find out what would make the park feel good for them. To have a sensory garden where people could feel inspired to sit and chat. To have a community noticeboard.

Many more wildflower areas. Introduce more children's activities and small GYM for children. Introduce more female biased activities separately, more exercise equipment for men, chessboard like equipment.

Children playground is the poorest in Leeds I take my children to various park as I drive but feeling sorry for those can't drive to take children in suitable playground especially disabled parents
The park feels quite unsafe at night due to its size, bordering a cemetery and darkness. Illumination wouldn't be a bad idea. It would also add value to create a parking area to get visitors cars off Coldcotes Avenue and Drive.

Picnic area is a bad idea, drug dealers.

The old playground area suggested as a picnic area with sculpture used to attract drug dealers and could possibly bring them back along with the drinkers.

The cottages near the bowling greens have been left in disrepair for years and would be much better being repaired and used as possibly a cafe/toilet facilities/meeting rooms etc.

More rubbish bins and signs asking people to actually use them! Or asking people to take their rubbish home with them, especially when they have picnics and barbecues as no matter how well they tidy up the foxes etc get into it overnight.

More facilities for teenagers and young adults.

Deterrents against antisocial behaviour to increase safety in and around the park.
More outdoor gym equipment.

As it is near the cemetery some of the new trees could be memory trees which people could buy in memory of loved ones in the cemetery, and/or those cremated who have their ashes interred there.

Safety is my number 1 priority though. I don't feel safe now in Harehills Park. Not sure what it needs, either park rangers on bikes making regular checks or police presence.

The Houses which are on the park to be done up and let people live in them. Also to keep all the drug addicts off the park at night, good people are too scared to come out of their homes.
The teenagers are not catered for in this park. They need a teen shelter & the green gym needs updating with more equipment which runs on bluetooth. Also bigger climbing frames for adults & teens. The group swing also needs either repairing or replacing.

It's a great place in the centre of the community. If we can make parks more welcoming and safe for Women & Girls we could have greater numbers using the park and enjoying their local park. Maybe we could have a future England Netballer that comes from Harehills?

It'll be nice to have info signs next to trees with name/type to learn more about nature.

More little interesting paths to explore and more wild areas.

Some users don't respect the park which is a huge shame as it is well used, especially by families who don't have gardens.

Remove the bench that's towards when exiting the park uncomfortable when walking across to exit as a lot of suspicious men sat on bench.

Great park seems quiet during office hours but is well used in evenings and weekends.

Yes, it's great. Don't interfere with it.

Clear the drug dealers out...install cctv make use of the cottages.

It's a good start but needs to go a bit further as a lack of public toilets means that locals with hidden disabilities and families who need a toilet for kids miss out in being able to use this park. Residents who do use it also complain about a dog fouling issue in this park which they say puts them off. It is also not signposted from the main road Harehills Lane so lots of people might not even know it exists.

More play Equipment especially for Junior children something like an Expression swing would be nice.

A no go area in the evenings.

Spend more money on regular maintenance.

Nice people in park.

The investment is a great idea to get families out to the local park and encourage physical activities in the area. It is a decent location just needs upkeep.

Toddler area needs urgent repair as it is currently unsafe and there is a risk of injury. (This should be the priority)

Lighting at ASDA end. Upgrade kids facilities.

The cottage would make an incredible community centre and cafe. So it would be wonderful if this was gifted to the local community to run, or have a purpose built cafe in the park. Currently no parks in or around Harehills have any food, baby change or toilet facilities which makes them far less family friendly than they should be especially in winter. Cafes near the park are small and serve quite unhealthy food that entirely overlooks halal and other alternative diets, so there's nowhere comfortable to go and eat nearby. Middleton Park cafe is a great example. The park plan look OK and would definitely be an improvement.

Make new and good entrances, gate.

Some sort of safety signs especially for dog handlers.

It's a nice park, it's a pity that more people don't use it. It's always really empty.

More facilities for teenagers and young adults such as swings and sporting facilities.

More outdoor gym equipment.

It takes me back to my childhood each time I visit. I would use it more if safety measures were endorsed and in place.

If everything is kept in condition all the time it will be nice

Some further comments from more informal conversations with users of Harehills Park:

Bigger Playground is much needed.
Better facilities for Autistic Children.
Musical Fountain like in India.
More things for kids.
New Swings and slides.
Playground Extended & under trees for shade.
More Trees & Sports.
Skate Park.

Comments from the "add something else" option of the question "Is there anything you think could be improved about Harehills park?":

Security and safety. More policing/PCSO patrols to discourage ASB and littering. More bins.

Some users don't dispose of their rubbish but I feel the council do try to clean up regularly.

Some dog users let the park down as they don't clean up dog mess and don't always control them. Lighting at night. Parking. More bins. Public toilets.

Lights to discourage people hanging around on an evening. Fix Basketball Rim. More police/ security presence.

Lighting on a night.

Toilets and activities for adults.

Safety, CCTV would be useful as it is used as a drinking and drugs park in the evenings.

Repair gym equipment.

More things for People to do, cafe for socialising. Make gates more accessible.

Toilets, ice cream van.

Small fairs and activities.

The playground needs to be bigger, have more and better equipment and given the same treatment as parks in more affluent areas. The playground facilities are shocking and not adequate for the size of the population we have in Harehills.

Street lights.

A cafe and toilet would be so valuable. Being able to buy healthy snacks. Huge increase in anything that would help people connect to each other. Much better play equipment and looked after sport areas. Benches and something creative in the orchard. Regular events and festivals. Running and walking groups for all ages. A community herb garden. Better access for disabled people.

Walkway lightings.

Lights and cameras at the vicarage entrance. Stop barbecues on the park.

Toilets.

Netball facilities.

The bowling green needs flood lights so can be enjoyed later in evenings and when weather is bad. Also the park needs more for teenagers to do to prevent from vandalising.

Lack of lighting in winter months and night-time.

There aren't any public toilets.

Not much to do.

Small entrances to park especially with double pushchairs.

I would like to take my 3, 5, 6 year old for bike rides in park but it's too hard for me to get in there on my bike so we have to use the roads.

Can only get in by cemetery as can't get into park other sides due to using a mobility scooter.

Don't come in at night.

Don't visit at night as no lights.

Not much to do for younger children. Playground equipment is in poor condition cracks and uneven floor.

Access to the park with [wheel]chairs isn't great.

I would go far more often if it is improved and invested in.

People waiting outside of the park near the entrance to the cemetery in cars dealing drugs and people who are intoxicated or on drugs slumped on the ground in the park.

Comments from Harehills primary school council:

Play kit was mentioned many times including specific enthusiasm for a zipline and trampolines.
Sports kit.
More bins.
Skate Park.
More outdoor gym kit & group it together.
Some children dislike bumpy paths.
One child really wanted child size basketball hoops.
Some children dislike long grass due to dog poo in it.
Some children would like an area to relax in.

Appendix 3: Current Analysis of Harehills Park

Figure 17: Analysis plan of Harehills Park





Playground in poor condition. In need of more exciting pieces and better surfacing. Missing gates makes it less safe and easy for dogs to access.



Furniture around site is generally in poor condition and inconsistent. Replacing with the same specification will make the site look more cohesive.



Some trees in designated tree planting area have either died or have been stolen. In need of replacement with proper stakes, wire mesh and management to increase likelihood of survival to maturity.



Outdoor gym equipment in good condition but surfacing underneath is either in poor condition or non-existent leading to unsightly areas of wear.



Redundant surfacing still in park - in need of removal to open the space up and make it more aesthetically pleasing and more open for recreational activities.

February 2023

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